What are the effects of consumption of high sugar drinks?

Fast Facts

- Higher consumption of high sugar drinks can lead to weight gain, being overweight can contribute to heart disease, diabetes and other chronic diseases.
- High sugar drink consumption is associated with tooth decay in all age groups and related impacts on long-term health.
- Soft drinks and other highly sweetened drinks such as cordial and fruit drinks generally provide a high number of kilojoules but few nutrients.
- Soft drinks are known to contain on average approximately 9 teaspoons of sugar for each regular (375ml) can consumed.
- Diet soft drinks contain significantly less sugar or kilojoules, but they are acidic and can damage tooth enamel.

Long term impacts

- Early introduction of high sugar beverages can have a major impact on the health of infants. “Consumption of these drinks is associated with a decline in milk consumption and reduced intake of important nutrients such as vitamins A, C, folate, calcium and magnesium.” (1)
- In the 2007 Australian National Children’s Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey, researchers identified that older girls aged 12-16 years were most at risk of not reaching their daily calcium nutrient requirement, with sweetened beverages most likely to have displaced milk in their diet. (2)
- Sugar-sweetened beverages can contain saturated fats (flavoured whole milks), excess sugar (soft-drinks, cordials, fruit drinks) and are highly acidic.
- The Obesity Working Group (Preventative Health Taskforce, 2009) reported that Indigenous Australians are 1.2 times as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to be overweight; 1.9 times as likely to be obese; and over 3 times more likely to be morbidly obese. (3)
- Causes of tooth enamel loss include “the exposure to acid from the consumption of soft drink, sports drinks, fruit and fruit juices…” (4) and other foods and drinks containing sugars and acids.

